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***Statement of Ms. Algimanta Pabedinskienė
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Ministerial session of the High-level Conference on the European Social Charter
“THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER IN AFFIRMING SOCIAL
RIGHTS DURING THE CRISIS PERIOD AND THE CRISIS EXIT PHASE”
17 October 2014, Turin (Italy)***

Distinguished delegates,

Dear Colleagues,

It's my pleasure to address this audience in this High-level Conference on the European Social Charter. Let me express my gratitude to the organisers for this opportunity.

I believe that the European Social Charter should be more appreciated being not only one of the flagship conventions of the Council of Europe, but also the most comprehensive international instrument that guarantees fundamental social and economic human rights as those rights concern citizens in their daily lives.

Lithuania has more than ten years experience of implementation of the provisions of the revised European Social Charter. We can admit that it has not always been very easy to fulfil our obligation under the revised Charter as implementation of social rights depends not so much on the good will of the Government as on the economic and social situation of the country.

Lithuania as a number of other countries has faced challenges during the global economic crisis. Even though it posed significant difficulty for maintaining the same level of the protection of economic and social rights, austerity measures, such as temporary reduction of salaries in the public sector as well as revision of certain benefits in 2010-2011, made it

possible to keep the social protection at the appropriate level. Therefore we could provide social assistance at least for the most vulnerable groups of the population at that difficult time. The reduced benefits have been already restored to the previous amounts and we are trying to compensate the loss according to our financial abilities giving priority to those most in need. I would like to stress that crisis gave us not only challenges, but also a good opportunity to learn and to consider how to make social security systems more relevant, adequate, stable and efficient. The European Social Charter with its unique and balanced supervising mechanism can be a useful tool seeking this goal as the States introduce changes to their legislation and practice in order to bring their situation into line with the Charter.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As human rights cannot be theoretical and illusory, social and economic human rights must be practical and effective. I hope that this conference will be a good opportunity to share our practice in guaranteeing fundamental social human rights and an important step for Europe to restart after the crisis.

Thank you for the attention.